

# Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515–2308

April 27, 2022

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole,

As the Committee begins consideration of the FY 2023 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related agencies appropriations legislation, we are writing to request that you strongly support the Charter Schools Program (CSP). The program has not received an increase in funding since FY 2018 and there has not been sufficient funding for all high quality applicants. We also ask that charter schools are treated fairly and not singled out for additional provisions that do not apply to all public schools.

Charter schools allow parents to choose a high-quality educational environment for their child regardless of income or zip code. The unique educational experience many charter schools provide helps level the playing field and ensure more children have a chance to achieve the American Dream.

Forty-five states, the District of Columbia, Guam, and Puerto Rico have charter school laws. In the 2020-2021 school year, public charter schools educated over 3.6 million students in roughly 7,700 schools. During the first full school year of the pandemic, nearly 240,000 additional students enrolled in public charter schools, representing 7% growth in one school year—the largest increase in half a decade and the only sector of public education to grow during the 2020-2021 school year.<sup>1</sup> As of the most recent years for which we have data, nearly 60% of the students served by these institutions were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, over two thirds were students of color, and 14.3% were English learner students.<sup>2</sup> Even prior to the pandemic, surveys indicated that there are between 3.7 and 5 million additional students that would attend a

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<sup>1</sup> Veney, D., & Jacobs, D. 2021. *Voting With Their Feet: A State-Level Analysis of Public Charter School and District Public School Enrollment Trends*. Washington, DC: National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. <https://www.publiccharters.org/our-work/publications/voting-their-feet-state-level-analysis-public-charter-school-and-district>.

<sup>2</sup> Demographic data points are from the most recent available data years. Free and Reduced-Price Lunch and demographics are from school year 2019-2020. English learner data is from school year 2018-2019.

charter school today if they had the opportunity. Charter schools also employ more teachers of color and are more likely to be led by a leader of color: according to data from the National Center for Education Statistics, 32% of charter school teachers and 33.5% of charter school leaders are people of color compared to 20% and 21.4% respectively in district public schools. Indeed, educators and aspiring school leaders of color, who often lack access to philanthropic and other funding sources, may stand to benefit the most from increased federal CSP funding.

Public charter schools continue to grow and deliver outstanding educational options to students nationwide and particularly to low-income children. A 2021 analysis of research on charter school effects and competitive influence by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) highlighted trends from three decades of research on charter schools. The report found that charter schools located in urban areas boost student test scores, particularly for Black, Hispanic, and low-income students; that attending some urban charter schools increases college enrollment and voting; and that the competitive impact of charter schools on traditional public schools suggests a small beneficial influence on neighboring schools' student achievement.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, a 2020 study from Harvard University found greater academic gains for student cohorts in charter schools, with the difference amounting to almost an additional half year of learning for students in charter schools over the course of the study. Black students and students from low-income backgrounds made the greatest gains. Also, a 2015 report from the Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford University found that charter schools located in our nation's largest urban districts are showing significant performance improvements for the most disadvantaged students.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many charter schools have used their flexibility and autonomy to meet the needs of their students and community. Recent reports from Public Impact and the Fordham Institute explore how both single-site charter schools and large charter school networks swiftly adapted to meet students' educational needs and ensure they had access to critical services. For many families, the charter school response to the pandemic made them the right public school choice, with 240,000 additional charter school students enrolling during the 2020-2021 school year.<sup>4</sup> Additional CSP funds are critical to support the launching of new schools and the replication and expansion of successful charter schools, and would offer important resources to help charter schools access facilities.

We appreciate the current investments in CSP, and we hope the subcommittee will build on the success of the program. The CSP is currently the only federal program that supports family choice in education across the country and the current appropriation for the CSP program is less than one percent of spending on K-12 education at the U.S. Department of Education. Through additional resources, robust support, and fair treatment of charter schools, we can

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<sup>3</sup> Cohodes, Sarah, and Katharine Parham. 2021. *Charter Schools' Effectiveness, Mechanisms, and Competitive Influence*. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. <https://www.nber.org/papers/w28477>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

ensure that more children have access to a high-quality education regardless of their parents' income or their zip code. Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,



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Joe Wilson  
Member of Congress



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Debbie Lesko  
Member of Congress



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Elise M. Stefanik  
Member of Congress



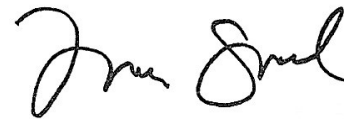
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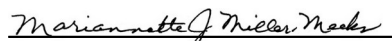
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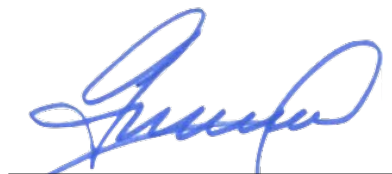
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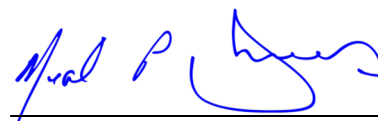
  
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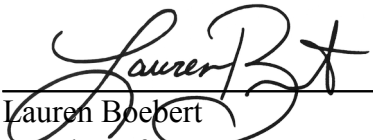
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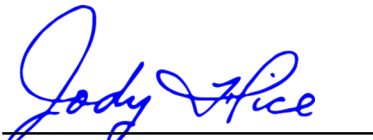
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